

Sūrah Luqmān

Sūrah Luqmān is Makkī. It has 34 Verses and 4 Sections

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 9

الَمْ ﴿١﴾ تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْكِتَابِ الْحَكِيمِ ﴿٢﴾ هُدًى وَرَحْمَةً
لِّلْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٣﴾ الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ
بِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ ﴿٤﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ عَلَىٰ هُدًى مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ
الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٥﴾ وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَشْتَرِي لَهْوَ الْحَدِيثِ لِيُضِلَّ عَن
سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ بَغِيرِ عِلْمٍ ۖ وَيَتَّخِذَهَا هُزُوًا ۖ أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّهِينٌ
﴿٦﴾ وَإِذَا تُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْهِ آيَاتُنَا وَلَّىٰ مُسْتَكْبِرًا ۖ كَانَ لَّمْ يَسْمَعْهَا ۖ كَانَ فِي
أُذُنَيْهِ وَقْرٌ ۖ فَبَشَّرَهُ بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ ﴿٧﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا
الصَّالِحَاتِ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتُ النَّعِيمِ ﴿٨﴾ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا ۖ وَعَدَ اللَّهُ حَقًّا
وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٩﴾

Alif Lām Mīm. [1] These are verses of the Wise Book, [2] a guidance and mercy for those good in deeds [3] who are steadfast in Ṣalāh and who pay Zakāh and do have faith in the Hereafter. [4] It is these who are on guidance given by their Lord, and it is just these who are successful. [5]

And from among the people, there is he who buys the distracting amusement of things, so that he, being

devoid of knowledge, may mislead (people) from the Way of Allah and make a mockery of it. Such people are the ones for whom there is a disgraceful punishment. [6]

And when Our verses are recited to him, he turns away in arrogance as if he did not hear them, as if there is heaviness in his ears. So give him the 'good' news of a painful punishment. [7]

Surely, those who believe and do righteous deeds, for them there are gardens of bliss [8] where they shall live forever - an absolute promise of Allah. And He is the Mighty, the Wise. [9]

Commentary

The words: يُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ (pay Zakāh) in Verse 4 carry the injunction of Zakāh, although the verse is Makki. This tells us that the original injunction of Zakāh had already been revealed before Hijrah, right there in Makkah al-Mu‘azzamah. As for the popular assumption that the injunction of Zakāh was enforced in the second year of Hijrah, it refers to the arrangement of fixing its *nisāb* (threshold), providing details of obligatory amount to be paid, collecting and disbursing it on authorized heads by the Islāmic government. This was done in the second year of Hijrah.

Ibn Kathīr while commenting on verse 20 of Sūrah Al-Muzzammil: أَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ (Establish Ṣalāh and pay Zakāh - 73:20) has arrived at the same conclusion, because Sūrah Al-Muzzammil as one of the Makki Sūrahs was revealed during the very initial period of the revelation of the Qur‘ān. This tells us that the way Ṣalāh and Zakāh have been described mostly side by side in the verses of the Qur‘ān, its obligation had also taken effect side by side. Allah knows best.

The word: اشتراء (ishtirā) in: وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَشْتَرِي لَهْوَ الْحَدِيثِ (And from among the people who buys the distracting amusement of things - 31:6) literally means 'to buy.' And on occasions, the same word is used in the sense of 'doing an act instead of another' - as in: أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرَوُا الضَّلَالَةَ بِالْهُدَى (These are the people who have bought error at the price of guidance - 2:16, 2:175) and in some other verses.

The Cause of Revelation

This verse was revealed because of a particular event relating to Naḍr Ibn Ḥārith. He was one of the top businessmen from among the *Mushriks*

of Makkah who used to travel to different countries in connection with his business. Once he bought and brought back a collection of historical stories featuring Cyrus and other Persian kings from Iran. Thus armed, he said to the Quraish of Makkah: "Muḥammad ﷺ tells you the stories of the people of 'Ād and Thamūd and others. I shall tell you better stories, those of Rustam, Isfandyār and other kings of Persia. They started listening to his stories eagerly simply because they contained no lessons to learn and no work to do. It was nothing but some delicious stories. Because of these, many *Mushriks* who had some measure of interest in the Divine Word because of its miraculous nature, rather listened to it stealthily, found an excuse to draw away from the Qur'ān. (ذكره في الروح عن أسباب النزول للواحدي ومقاتل وذكر نحوه في الدر المنثور برواية البيهقي)

And according to a narration of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ in Ad-Durr al-Manthūr, the businessman mentioned above had brought in a singing bondwoman he bought in a foreign country. It was through her that he devised a plan to stop people from listening to the Qur'ān. When he found anyone intending to go and listen to the Qur'ān, he would have him hear his bondwoman sing before him. He used to say: 'Muḥammad ﷺ makes you listen to the Qur'ān, then goes on to ask you to pray and fast which make life difficult for you. Come, you listen to this music and enjoy the fun.'

The verse of the Qur'ān being referred to here was revealed in relation to this very event. Here, the *ishtirā'* (buying) of *lahw al-ḥadīth* (the distracting amusement of things) means either those tales of the Persian kings, or this singing bondwoman. In terms of the event in the background of the revelation, the word: *إِشْتَرَاءٌ* (*ishtirā'*) has been used in the real sense for buying.

And in terms of the general sense of *لَهْوُ الْحَدِيثِ* (*lahw al-ḥadīth*: the distracting amusement of things) being enunciated later, the word: *إِشْتَرَاءٌ* (*ishtirā'*) is also in its general sense at this place, that is, to opt for something instead of something else. This includes the buying of things of 'lahw' (amusement) as well.

As for the word: *حَدِيثٌ* (*ḥadīth*) in *لَهْوُ الْحَدِيثِ* (*lahw al-ḥadīth*), it is there in the sense of tales told and things said and done. Then the word 'lahw' itself literally means to become heedless. In other words, things that make

one become negligent of what must be done are also called '*lahw*.' Then there are occasions when things that bring no worthwhile benefit, rather serve as pastime or entertainment only, are also referred to as لَهْو '*lahw*.'

As regards the meaning and exegetical explanation of the expression: لَهْوُ الْحَدِيثِ (*lahw al-ḥadīth*: distracting amusement of things - 4) in the cited verse, sayings of commentators differ. In a narration of Sayyidnā Ibn Mas'ūd, Ibn 'Abbās and Jābir رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ اجمعين, it has been explained as music, vocal or instrumental (reported and verified by al-Ḥākim, and al-Baihaqī in ash-Shu'ab).

And in the view of the majority of Ṣaḥābah, Tābi'īn and commentators at large, the expression: لَهْوُ الْحَدِيثِ (*lahw al-ḥadīth*: the distracting amusement of things) applies generally to everything which makes one fall into a state of heedlessness as to the remembrance and worship of Allah. Included therein is music accompanied by instruments, and obscene or absurd fictional narratives as well. Imām al-Bukhārī in his book, al-'Adab al-Mufrad, and al-Baihaqī in his Sunan have both elected to go by this Tafsīr. Al-Bukhārī has said:

لَهْوُ الْحَدِيثِ هُوَ الْغِنَاءُ وَأَشْبَاهُهُ

'*Lahw al-ḥadīth*' means playing music and things similar to it (which make one heedless to the worship of Allah).

And it appears in Sunan al-Baihaqī that opting for or buying the distracting amusement of things (إِشْتِرَاءُ لَهْوِ الْحَدِيثِ : *ishtirā' lahwi al-ḥadīth*) means buying a bondman or bondwoman who sings and plays instruments, or buying similar other immodest things which make one heedless to the remembrance of Allah. Ibn Jarīr has also taken to this general sense. The same generality is proved by a narration of Tirmidhī where the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said, 'Do not buy or sell singing bondwomen,' after which he said, مِثْلُ هَذَا أَنْزَلَتْ هَذِهِ الْآيَةُ وَمِنْ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَشْتَرِي (About such things this verse [i.e. verse 6 which is under discussion] was revealed)

Islamic Legal Injunctions of لَهْوٌ وَلَعِبٌ '*Lahw wa La'ib*' (play and game) and its Equipment

Full details of these injunctions supported by proofs from the Qur'ān and Sunnah have been provided in a treatise contained in احكام القرآن

(Aḥkāṁ ul-Qur'ān) written by this humble writer. It also carries an equally detailed discussion on music and musical instruments in the light of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth along with the sayings of Muslim jurists and mystics. This treatise in Arabic* has been published in volume V of Aḥkāṁ ul-Qur'ān. Learned readers may consult it at their discretion. A gist is being given here for others interested in the subject.

First of all, it should be borne in mind wherever the Qur'ān has mentioned *Lahw* and *La'ib*, it is in the context of its disparagement and degradation, the lowest degree of which is *karāhah* (repugnance or reprehensibility) (Rūḥ ul-M'ānī and al-Kashshāf) and the cited verse is open and clear in declaring it as vice.

And in Kitābul-Jihād of al-Ḥākim's Mustadrak, it has been reported by Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

كُلُّ شَيْءٍ مِّنْ لَّهِ الدُّنْيَا بَاطِلٌ إِلَّا ثَلَاثَةٌ: اِتِّصَالُكَ بِقَوْسِكَ وَتَادِيَتُكَ لِفَرَسِكَ،
وَمُلَاعَبَتُكَ لِأَهْلِكَ فَإِنَّهُنَّ مِنَ الْحَقِّ

Every *Lahw* (play) of the world is false except three things: (1) that you play with your bow and arrow (2) and that you play while training your horse and (3) that you play with your wife - because these are among acceptable rights.

(Ḥākim has said that this Ḥadīth is Ṣaḥīḥ on the condition set forth by Muslim. But, adh-Dhahabī and others have not accepted it as *muttaṣil*, (of an uninterrupted chain) Instead, he calls it a *mursal* (of an interrupted chain). But, in the sight of the majority of Ḥadīth experts, a *mursal* hadith is also authentic).

In this Ḥadīth, every '*lahw*' or play has been declared as false with the exception of three. These, in reality, are just not included under the definition of '*lahw*' because '*lahw*' is supposed to be something in which there is no worthwhile religious or worldly benefit. And these three things are worthwhile. Many religious and worldly advantages are attached with them. As for archery and training of horses, they are part of the preparation for Jihād. Then, playfulness with one's wife serves the purpose of procreation. That they have been named as '*lahw*' is simply because of outward similarity. In terms of reality, they are just not included under '*lahw*.' Similarly, other than these three, there are many things that yield religious or worldly benefit while, seen outwardly, they are supposed to be '*lahw*' or play. These too have been rated as

permissible in other narrations of Ḥadīth; in fact, some of these have been declared to be commendable. Relevant detail will follow.

In gist, the doing of things which are '*lahw*,' in real terms, that is, in which there is no benefit, neither religious nor worldly, are all necessarily blameworthy and *makrūh* (repugnant, reprehensible) after all. Then, there are details about them. Some reach the extent of *kufr* (infidelity). Others are explicitly *ḥarām* (forbidden) the lowest degree of which is their being *makrūh tanzīhī*, that is, counter to the preferred choice (*khilāf al-awlā*). No '*lahw*,' which really qualifies as '*lahw*,' is exempt from it. As for the plays exempted in Ḥadīth, they just do not fall under the definition of '*lahw*' as it has been already clarified in Ḥadīth itself. In Abū Dāwūd, Tirmidhī, An-Nasā'ī and Ibn Mājah, there is a narration from Sayyidnā 'Uqbah Ibn 'Amir رضي الله عنه. It appears in Kitāb ul-Jihād in the words: لَيْسَ مِنَ اللَّهْوِ ثَلَاثُ تَأْدِيبِ الرَّجُلِ فَرَسَهُ، وَمَلَأَ عَيْنَهُ، أَهْلَهُ، وَرَمَيْهِ، بِقَوْسِهِ وَنَبْلِهِ (Three things do not fall under '*lahw*': (1) Man training his horse and (2) playing with his wife and (3) shooting with his bow and arrows (Naṣbur-Rāyah, p. 273, v. 4). This Ḥadīth has itself made it clear that these three things that have been exempted are simply not included in '*lahw*.' - and that which is really '*lahw*' is false and blameworthy. The different degrees of its blameworthiness follow next:

1. Playing that becomes a conduit of going astray from one's Religion, or making others turn away from it, is *kufr* (infidelity) - as stated in the cited verse: وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَشْتَرِي لَهْوَ الْحَدِيثِ 6. There it has been declared to be an act of grave error and infidelity, the punishment of which is painful, a punishment particular to those who have disbelieved (*kuffār*). The reason is that this verse was revealed following an event relating to Naḍr Ibn Ḥārith in which he had used this '*lahw*' to divert people from Islām. Therefore, this '*lahw*' (distracting amusement) did not remain simply *ḥarām* (forbidden), in fact, it went to the extent of becoming *kufr* (infidelity).
2. The second form is that which does not make people go astray from Islamic Beliefs, but does make them get involved with something forbidden and sinful. This, then, would not be *kufr* as such. But, patently unlawful and gravely sinful it shall remain - as do all those games played with bets. In other words, these may be games where the element of gambling (*qimār*) is present with giving or

taking of money on winning or losing, or recreational activities that impede the performance of religious duties such as prayers and fasting etc.

The reading of Shameless Fiction or Poetry or Writings of the Proponents of the False is also Not Permissible.

In our time, an alarming number of young people get introduced to shameless fiction, stories and novels based on plots featuring people who fancy and flirt with crimes, and poetry composed of indecent and shameless couplets. All these things are included under this kind of distracting amusement which is forbidden '*lahw*.' Similarly, the study of ideas dished out by the wayward proponents of the false is also not permissible for common people, because this could become an active agent in misleading them from the straight path. Should the 'Ulamā' who are well grounded in religious knowledge study them for rebuttal, it does not matter.

3. As for playing games that have neither an element of *kufr* (infidelity) nor of open sinfulness, they are *makrūh* (repugnant) in that one would be wasting his energy and time in an activity that yields no benefit.

Buying and Selling of the Equipment used in Games

From the details given above, we have also come to know the rule operating in the buying and selling of equipment used in games. The rule is that the trading, buying and selling of equipment used in games characterized by infidelity, error, unlawfulness and sin is also *ḥarām* (forbidden). And that which is used in *makrūh lahw*, its trading is also *makrūh*; and the equipment that is used in permissible and exempted games, its trading is also permissible; and the equipment that is used in permissible and impermissible activities both, its trading is permissible.

Allowed and Permissible Games

As already explained in detail, what is blameworthy and prohibited is that particular '*lahw*' or amusement or play or game which has no religious or worldly benefit in it. Games played to maintain physical health and mobility, or for some other religious or worldly need, or at the least, are for relief from fatigue without any excessive indulgence to the extent of causing disruption in necessary duties, then, such games are

allowed by the Shari'ah. And should the participation in them be with the intention of fulfilling a religious need, then, they are *thawāb*-worthy as well.

Also mentioned in the Ḥadīth appearing above was the exemption of three game forms from the prohibition: Shooting of arrows, riding horses and playing with 'ahl' (wife). And in a *marfū' ḥadīth* (attributed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ) from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, it appears: خير لهو المؤمن السباحة وخير لهو المرأة المغزل (The best game for a believer is swimming and the best game for a woman is the spinning wheel) (al-Jami' aṣ-Ṣaghīr, from Ibn 'Adiyy, with weak chain of narrators).

According to a narration, Sayyidnā Salamah Ibn Akwa' رضي الله عنه, says, "Someone from among the Anṣār of Madīnah was a great sprinter. No one could win a race against him. Once he publicly threw a challenge if there was anyone who would run a race against him. I sought the permission of the Holy Prophet ﷺ if I could compete against him. When he gave me the permission, I was the one who went ahead in the race.' This tells us that it is also permissible to practice foot racing.

Once, when a well-known wrestler called Rukānah challenged the Holy Prophet ﷺ to wrestle against him, he accepted the challenge and won the bout (Abū Dāwūd in al-marāsīl).

Some Ethiopian young men used to play with spears as a rehearsal. The Holy Prophet ﷺ let Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها see their game of martial skill while she stood behind his back and he said to the performers, "إِلْهَوْا وَالْعَبُوا" (*ilhū wal-'abū*: have fun, keep playing) [Reported by al-Baihaqī in Ash-Shu'ab, as in al-Kanz, Bab ul-Lahw). In some narrations, the following words also appear along with it: فَإِنِّي أَكْرَهُ أَنْ يُرَى فِي دِينِكُمْ غِلَظَةٌ (I do not like that people see harshness in your religion).

Similarly, it has been reported from some Ṣaḥābah that they, when tired after their duties relating to the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, would once in a while relax with Arab poetry or historical events (from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه in Kaff ar-Ra'a').

In a Ḥadīth, it was said: "رَوِّحُوا الْقُلُوبَ سَاعَةً فَسَاعَةً"] (Let your hearts rest now and then). [Reported by Abū Dāwūd in his Marāsīl from Ibn Shihāb 'mursalan', that is, attributed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ by the student of one of the Ṣaḥābah with

the name of the narrating Ṣaḥābī not mentioned] This ḥadīth proves the permissibility of recreation meant to relax one's mind and heart and the need to spare some time for it.

However, when doing all these things, the aim should be to achieve the correct and sound objective of those games. Playing for the sake of playing should never be the objective. Even that too is restricted to the measure of need. Any indulgence that stretches to unreasonable proportions or touches the limits of excess would not be in order. Thus, the reason behind the justification of all these games is no other but that they have to be within their limits. If so, they would just not be counted as '*lahw*.'

Games Prohibited Explicitly

Along with the games mentioned above, there are others the Holy Prophet ﷺ has prohibited particularly - even though, some benefits may be seen therein - such as, chess, backgammon and others played with counters and pieces. If accompanied by giving and taking of money on winning and losing, then, this is gambling, and is absolutely *ḥarām* (forbidden). And should this not be the case and they may be played just for enjoyment, even then, they have been prohibited in Ḥadīth. According to a narration of Sayyidnā Buraidah in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "A person who plays backgammon is like the one who has smeared his hands with the blood of pig." Similar to this, there is another narration where words of curse appear against the player of chess. ('Uqaili in *aḍ-Ḍu'afā'* from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ as in *Naṣbur-Rāyah*)

Similarly, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has declared playing with pigeons as impermissible. [Abū Dāwūd in *al-Marasīl* from Shuraiḥ as in *al-Kanz*] The apparent reason for the prohibition of this type of pastimes is that the player of these games becomes so preoccupied with them that he would turn heedless towards other things he must do, even to Ṣalāh, and other religious obligations.

The Injunctions of Music and Musical Instruments

Some Ṣaḥābah have explained the expression: *لَهْوُ الْحَدِيثِ* (*lahw al-ḥadīth*: the distracting amusement of things) in the cited verse as singing and playing of musical instruments. Then, there are others who have explained it in the general sense and consider every such playful

activity that makes one heedless towards Allah to be the meaning of: *لَهُوَ الْحَدِيثُ* (*lahw al-ḥadīth*). But, even in their view, singing and playing of instrumental music are included therein.

And in another verse of the Qur'ān: لَا يَشْهَدُونَ الزُّورَ (those who do not witness falsehood - Al-Furqān, 25:72), the word: ... (az-zūr: falsehood, the false) has been explained by Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, Mujāhid, Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥanafiyyah and others as '*ghinā*' (singing and playing of instrumental music).

And Abū Dāwūd and Ibn Mājah in Sunan and Ibn Ḥibbān in his Ṣaḥīḥ have reported from Sayyidnā Abū Mālīk al-Ash'arī رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

لَيَشْرَبَنَّ نَاسٌ مِّنْ أُمَّتِي الْخَمْرَ يَسْمُونَهَا بِغَيْرِ اسْمِهَا يُعْزَفُ عَلَى رُؤُسِهِم بِالْمَعَازِفِ
وَالْمُغَنِّيَاتِ يَخْسِفُ اللَّهُ بِهِمُ الْأَرْضَ وَيَجْعَلُ اللَّهُ مِنْهُمُ الْغُرْدَةَ وَالْخَنَازِيرَ

Indeed some people from my community will drink wine giving it a name other than the name it already has. Music will be played right on their faces with instruments and singing women in attendance. Allah Ta'ala will make the earth sink with them, while He will make some of them monkeys and pigs.

And according to a narration from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Allah Ta'ālā has forbidden wine, gambling, drum and *sārangi* (string instrument like violin) and he said, "Everything that intoxicates is *ḥarām* (forbidden, unlawful) [Reported by Imām Aḥmad, Abū Dāwūd and Ibn Ḥibbān]

It has been reported from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

رَوَى عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِذَا اتَّخَذَ الْفَيْ دُولًا
وَالْإِمَانَةَ مَغْنَمًا وَالزُّكُوتَ مَغْرَمًا وَتَعَلَّمَ لُغْيَ الدِّينِ وَاطَّاعَ الرَّجُلَ أَمْرَهُ وَعَقَى أُمَّهُ وَأَدْنَى
صَدِيقِهِ وَأَقْصَى أَبَاهُ وَظَهَرَتِ الْأَصْوَاتُ فِي الْمَسَاجِدِ وَسَادَ الْقَبِيلَةَ فَاسْقَهُمْ وَكَانَ
زَعِيمُ الْقَوْمِ أَرْدَلَهُمْ وَأَكْرَمَ الرَّجُلِ مَخَافَةُ شَرِّهِ وَظَهَرَتِ الْقِيَانُ وَالْمَعَازِفُ وَشَرِبَتِ
الْخُمُورُ وَلَعَنَ آخِرُ هَذِهِ الْأُمَّةِ أَوَّلَهَا فَلْيَبْتَغُوا عِنْدَ ذَلِكَ رِيحًا حَمْرًا وَزَلْزَلَةً وَخَسْفًا
وَمُسْحًا وَقَدْفًا وَأَيَاتٍ تَتَابَعُ كَنْظَامُ بِالْ قَطْعِ سُلْكَهَ فَتَتَابَعُ بَعْضُهُ بَعْضًا (رواه الترمذی
وقال هذا حديث حسن غريب)

When spoils are taken as personal property and trust property

as spoils and Zakāh as penalty, and religious learning is acquired for worldly objectives, and when man starts obeying his wife and disobeying his mother, and keeps his friend near and his father far, and when voices rise in mosques and the chief of a tribe becomes its worst sinner and when the chief of a people becomes their lowest of the low and when wicked people are respected out of fear for them, and when singing girls and musical instruments appear all over and when wines of all sorts are consumed and when the later of this Ummah start cursing the former - then, at that time, you wait for a red storm, and earthquake, and the sinking of the earth, and the metamorphosis of figures and faces, and missiles, and the signs of Doomsday following each other, one after the other, like a broken necklace with its beads scattered simultaneously.

(Reported by Tirmidhī calling it a Hasan-Gharīb Ḥadīth)

A Warning Not to Be Ignored!

Read the words of this Ḥadīth again and again, and you will start seeing a blueprint of the world of our time spread out before you. Here is an advance warning given by the Holy Prophet ﷺ almost fourteen hundred years ago, against sins prevailing among Muslims, and which are increasing day by day. He has reminded Muslims that they have to remain vigilant against such conditions and take full precautions to avoid such sins both personally and socially. Otherwise, once these sins become accepted common practice, such sinners will be visited by Divine punishments. Then, the very last signs of Qiyāmah will appear squarely before them. Since, the singing of women and the playing of musical instruments are included under those sins, this narration has been cited in the present context.

For that matter, there are many more authentic Aḥādīth where singing and playing of musical instruments have been declared unlawful and impermissible. Severe warnings have been given against indulging in these. This humble writer has cited all these narrations in his treatise entitled: "كشف الغناء عن وصف الغنى" which is in Arabic and has been published as Part V of Aḥkām ul-Qur'ān. Only some of those have been given here.

Reciting morally beneficial poetry in a good voice without musical instruments is not prohibited

In contrast to what has been stated above, there are narrations that

seem to hint towards permissibility of 'ghinā' (singing). Such narrations have also been collected and included in the treatise referred to here. To bring the two kinds of narration in harmony, it can be said that the singing of a *non-mahram* woman, or a song accompanied by musical instruments are forbidden. This is in accordance with what has been proved on the authority of the cited verses of the Qur'an and from the Aḥādīth of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. However, if some poetic compositions are recited in a pleasing voice, and the reciting person is not a woman or a beardless young man, and the subject of the poetry recited is also not vulgar or indecent and is not inclusive of any other sin, then, it is permissible.

As for the reports attributed to some revered ṣūfīs, that they listened to 'ghinā' (*samā*), it is based on this kind of permissible 'ghinā'- because, it is certain that they followed the Shari'ah and Sunnah faithfully. That they would ever commit some such sin, simply cannot be imagined. Those learned among the Ṣūfīs have themselves explained it explicitly. The treatise mentioned earlier carries the sayings of the jurists of the four schools of jurisprudence as well as those of the Ṣūfī authorities. At this place, the summary as given has been considered sufficient in the present context.*

Verses 10 - 11

خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ بِغَيْرِ عَمَدٍ تَرَوْنَهَا وَالْأَرْضِ رَوَاسِيَ أَنْ
تَمِيدَ بِكُمْ وَبَثَّ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ دَابَّةٍ ۖ وَأَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَنْبَتْنَا
فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجٍ كَرِيمٍ ﴿١٠﴾ هَذَا خَلْقُ اللَّهِ فَأَرُونِي مَاذَا خَلَقَ
الَّذِينَ مِنْ دُونِهِ ۚ بَلِ الظَّالِمُونَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ ﴿١١﴾

He has created the skies without the pillars that you may see, and placed mountains on the earth, lest it shakes with you, and spread over it all kinds of creatures. And We sent down water from the heavens and caused to grow in it every noble pair. [10] This is

*. The original work in Arabic and its Urdu translation with exhaustive notes under the title, "Islām aur Mausiqi" (Islām and Music) has been published by Maktaba-e-Darul-Uloom, Jamia Darul-Uloom, Korangi, Karachi-75180, Pakistan. Those interested in a detailed discussion of the subject would find both versions useful.

the creation of Allah. Now, show me what is created by those others, besides Him. Rather, the transgressors are in open error. [11]

Commentary

Verse 10 opens with the words: خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ بِغَيْرِ عَمَدٍ تَرَوْنَهَا (He has created the skies without the pillars that you may see). Another verse on the same subject: اللَّهُ الَّذِي رَفَعَ السَّمَوَاتِ بِغَيْرِ عَمَدٍ تَرَوْنَهَا (Allah is the One who raised the heavens without pillars. You see them. 13:2) has appeared earlier in Sūrah Ar-Ra'd (with a different translation). Analyzed grammatically, the text admits two alternative meanings.

1. If we were to take تَرَوْنَهَا (*tarawnahā*) to be the attribute of عَمَدٍ (*'amad*) and revert its pronoun to *'amad*, it would mean that Allah Ta'ālā created the skies without pillars that you may see, that is, had the pillars been there, you would have seen them. When pillars are not seen, it is clear that this great roof of the sky has been erected without pillars. This explanation has been reported from Sayyidnā Ḥasan عليه السلام and Qatādah. (Ibn Kathīr)

2. And if we were to take the pronoun of: تَرَوْنَهَا (*tarawnahā*) as reverting to: السَّمَوَاتِ (*as-samāwāt*: the skies) and this sentence as standing independently, then, it would mean that 'Allah Ta'ālā created the skies without pillars as you see.' Then, there is yet another option in the case of the first grammatical analysis whereby it could also be taken to mean that 'The skies stand on pillars that you cannot see - they are invisible.' This last explanation has been reported from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās, 'Ikrimah and Mujāhid رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ اَجْمَعِينَ (Ibn Kathīr).

No matter what the option, the verse does point out to the particular sign of the perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā that He has made this extensive, high and magnificent roof in a way that no column and pillar is seen thereunder.

Verses 12 - 19

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا لُقْمَانَ الْحِكْمَةَ أَنْ اشْكُرْ لِلَّهِ ۖ وَمَنْ يَشْكُرْ فَإِنَّمَا يَشْكُرُ
لِنَفْسِهِ ۖ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَنِيٌّ حَمِيدٌ ﴿١٢﴾ وَإِذْ قَالَ لُقْمَانُ لِابْنِهِ

وَهُوَ يَعْظُهُ، يُبْنَى لَا تُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ ۖ إِنَّ الشِّرْكَ لَظُلْمٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٣﴾
وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ ۖ حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ، وَهْنًا عَلَى وَهْنٍ وَفِضْلُهُ، فِى
عَامِينَ أَنْ اشْكُرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيْكَ ۖ إِلَى الْمَصِيرِ ﴿١٤﴾ وَإِنْ جَاهَدَاكَ
عَلَى أَنْ تُشْرِكَ بِي مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ فَلَا تُطِعْهُمَا وَصَاحِبُهُمَا فِى
الدُّنْيَا مَعْرُوفًا وَاتَّبِعْ سَبِيلَ مَنْ أَنَابَ إِلَى ۖ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ مَرْجِعِكُمْ
فَأُنَبِّئُكُم بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٥﴾ يُبْنَىٰ إِنَّهَا إِنْ تَكُ مِثْقَالَ حَبَّةٍ مِّنْ
خَرْدَلٍ فَتَكُنْ فِى صَخْرَةٍ أَوْ فِى السَّمَاءِ أَوْ فِى الْأَرْضِ يَأْتِ بِهَا
اللَّهُ ۖ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَطِيفٌ خَبِيرٌ ﴿١٦﴾ يُبْنَىٰ أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ
وَأَنْهَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَاصْبِرْ عَلَىٰ مَا أَصَابَكَ ۖ إِنَّ ذَٰلِكَ مِنْ عَزْمِ الْأُمُورِ
﴿١٧﴾ وَلَا تُصْعِرْ خَدَّكَ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَمْشِ فِى الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا ۖ إِنَّ اللَّهَ
لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُورٍ ﴿١٨﴾ وَأَقْصِدْ فِى مَشْيِكَ وَاعْضُضْ مِنْ
صَوْتِكَ ۖ إِنَّ أَنْكَرَ الْأَصْوَاتِ لَصَوْتُ الْحَمِيرِ ﴿١٩﴾

And We gave wisdom to Luqmān, (and said), "Be grateful to Allah." And whoever is grateful is, in fact, grateful for his own benefit, and whoever is ungrateful, then Allah is free of all needs, worthy of all praise. [12]

And when Luqmān said to his son while he was advising him, "My dear son, do not ascribe partners to Allah. Indeed, ascribing partners to Allah (*shirk*) is grave transgression." [13]

We commanded man (to be good) about his parents. His mother carried him facing weakness after weakness, and his weaning is in two years: "Be grateful to Me and to your parents. To Me is the ultimate return. [14] And if they force you to ascribe to Him partners about whom you have no knowledge, do not obey them. And be with them in this world, with due fairness, and follow the way of the one who has turned himself towards Me. Then, towards Me is your return, so I shall tell you about what you had been doing." [15]

"My dear son, in fact, if there be anything to the measure of a grain of rye, and it be (hidden) in a rock or in the heavens or in the earth, Allah will bring it forth. Surely, Allah is All-Fine, All Aware. [16] My dear son, establish Ṣalāh, and bid the Fair and forbid the Unfair, and observe patience on what befalls you. Surely, this is among the matters of determination. [17] And do not turn your cheek away from people, and do not walk on the earth haughtily. Surely, Allah does not like anyone arrogant, proud. [18] And be moderate in your walk, and lower your voice. Surely, the ugliest of voices is the voice of the donkeys." [19]

Commentary

Who was Luqmān عليه السلام mentioned in verse 12: وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا لُقْمَانَ الْحِكْمَةَ (And We gave wisdom to Luqmān)? According to a report of Wahb Ibn Munabbih, Luqmān, عليه السلام was a nephew of Sayyidnā Ayyūb (Job) عليه السلام while Muqātil identifies him as his brother from his maternal aunt. It appears in Tafsīr ul-Baiḍāwī and elsewhere that he lived long, as long as the time of Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام. It is proved by other reports too that Luqmān, عليه السلام appeared during the time of Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام.

And the report of Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه appearing in ad-Durr al-Manthūr says that he was an Ethiopian slave who worked as a carpenter (narrated by Ibn Abī Shaibah and Aḥmad in az-Zuhd, and Ibn Jarīr and Ibn al-Mundhir and others). When the Ṣaḥābī, Sayyidnā Jābir Ibn ‘Abdullāh رضي الله عنه was asked about his background, he said that he was an Ethiopian of low height and flat nose. And Mujāhid said that he was a thick-lipped, cracked-footed Ethiopian slave (al-Zajjā). (Ibn Kathīr)

An Ethiopian came to Sa‘īd Ibn al-Musayyab looking for an answer to some religious problem. The famous Ṭabī‘ī consoled him by telling him that he should not worry about the dark color of his skin, because there were three highly revered persons from among the black people who were regarded as the best of any people anywhere. Then he cited the names of Sayyidnā Bilāl al-Ḥabashī, Sayyidnā Mahja', the freed slave of Sayyidnā ‘Umar Ibn ul-Khaṭṭāb رضي الله عنهم اجمعين, and Luqmān عليه السلام.

The Identity of Luqmān عليه السلام

According to Ibn Kathīr, the majority of the elders concur that he was not a prophet. That he was a prophet has been reported only from

‘Ikrimah , but the authority of this report is weak. Then, Imām al-Baghawī reports a consensus on the fact that he was a man of wisdom and knowledgeable in religious law, but not a prophet. (Maẓharī)

Ibn Kathīr has also pointed out to an unusual report from Sayyidnā Qatādah about him saying that Allah Ta‘ālā had given Luqmān ﷺ a choice between prophethood (*nubuwwah*) and wisdom (*ḥikmah*). He opted for wisdom. And in some reports, it appears that he was given the option to be a prophet. But he had submitted that he would be honored to accept it if that was a command, otherwise he should be excused.

Again, it has also been reported from Sayyidnā Qatādah that someone asked Luqmān, ﷺ: 'Why did you prefer wisdom over prophethood while you were given a choice between the two?' He said, 'The office of a prophet carries great responsibilities. Had that been given to me without my choice, Allah Ta‘ālā would have been sufficient to see that I am enabled to discharge its responsibilities as due. And if I had asked for it with my choice and volition, the responsibility would have been mine.' (Ibn Kathīr)

Now, it already stands established that Luqmān ﷺ was not a *Nabiyy* or prophet. This is as held by the majority of the scholars. So, we can say that the command mentioned in the present verse (i.e. Be grateful to Allah) could have been given to him through *Ilhām* (inspiration) attributed to men of Allah (*awliyā’ Allah*).

Before the time of Sayyidnā Dāwūd ﷺ, Luqmān ﷺ used to give *Fatwā* (religious rulings on questions asked by people). When Sayyidnā Dāwūd ﷺ was invested with prophethood, he stopped this practice believing that he was not needed anymore. According to some reports, he was a judge among the Banī Isrā’īl. Many words of wisdom have been reported from him. Wahb Ibn Munnabih says that he has read more than ten thousand of these. (Qurṭubī)

On a certain day, while sage Luqmān was addressing a big gathering of people sharing his wisdom with them, there came a person and asked him point blank: 'Are you not the same person who used to graze goats with me in such and such forest?' Luqmān ﷺ, said: 'Yes, I am the same person.' The man asked, 'How then, could you achieve this status that such multitudes of people hold you in reverence and come to hear your

words from far and wide?' Luqmān عليه السلام, said: 'The reason lies in two things I do: (1) Always telling the truth and (2) avoiding the useless things. It appears in another report that he said: 'I tell you about a few things that have given me this station in life. If you were to take to these, you too will have the same rank and status. These are as follow: (1) Lower your gaze and hold your tongue. (2) Stay content with lawful sustenance. (3) Guard your private parts. (4) Tell the truth and uphold it. (5) Fulfill the pledge. (6) Honor the guest. (7) Protect the neighbor. (8) Observe silence against wasteful speech and leave off all useless indulgences.' (Ibn Kathīr)

What does the '*ḥikmah*' given to Luqmān actually mean?

The word: *حِكْمَة* (*ḥikmah*) has been used in the Qur'ān (20 times) conveying several meanings such as wisdom, knowledge, reason, forbearance, patience, prophethood, and correctness of opinion.

Commentator Abū Ḥayyān has said: '*Ḥikmah* means a statement in words, a statement that teaches people a lesson, a lesson that goes down their hearts and which they conserve and communicate to others.'

And the famous Ṣaḥābī, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه said: '*Ḥikmah* means intellect, understanding and intelligence' while some others have said that acting in accordance with knowledge is what *Ḥikmah* is. In reality, there is no contradiction here. All these ingredients are included under the purview of *Ḥikmah*. Those who have seen the abridged *Tafsīr* of moulana Ashraf Alī Thānavi in the original Urdu version of the present *Tafsīr* will notice that he has translated *Ḥikmah* in the sense of prudence and wisdom and explained it as being knowledge that has been put into practice. This is very comprehensive and very clear.

After having mentioned the giving of *Ḥikmah* to Luqmān, on whom be peace, in this verse (12), it was said: "Be grateful to Allah." Here, the first probability is to take the word: *قُلْنَا* (*qulnā*: We said) as understood. The sense would be that 'We gave *Ḥikmah* to Luqmān and commanded him to be grateful to Allah.' Then, there are others who have also said that the statement: *أَنْ اشْكُرْ لِلَّهِ* (*anishkur lillah*: Be grateful to Allah) is in itself an explanation of *Ḥikmah*. In other words, the *Ḥikmah* given to Luqmān was that 'We gave him the command to be grateful which he

carried out.' In that case, it would mean that being grateful to the blessings of Allah Ta'ālā is the greatest wisdom (*ḥikmah*). Soon after, it was explicitly clarified that this command to be grateful was not given by Allah Ta'ālā to earn some benefit for Himself. He needs no gratefulness from anyone. In fact, it has been done in the interest of human beings and for their benefit - because, according to the law of Allah, whoever is grateful to Him, He causes an increase in the blessings given to a person.

Mentioned after that there are some words of wise counsel spoken by Luqmān to his son. These have been reported by the Qur'an so that others may also benefit from these.

Out of these wise advices, first comes the soundness of beliefs, the primary article of which is that one believes in Allah Ta'ālā to be the Creator and master of the entire universe without any association or partnership of anyone or anything. In consequence, one should not take anyone other than Allah as an object of worship, for no injustice can be as grave in this world as the act of one who stoops to equate some creation of Allah Ta'ālā with the Creator. Therefore, it was said: يُبْنَىٰ لَا تُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّ الشِّرْكَ لَظُلْمٌ عَظِيمٌ (My dear son, do not ascribe partners to Allah. Indeed, ascribing partners to Allah is (*shirk*) grave transgression - 13). Later, follow other words of good counsel and wisdom spoken by Luqmān to his son. In between, there appears another command to highlight the gravity of *Shirk* and that it has to be avoided under all circumstances. This command is as follows:

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ ۖ حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ وَهْنًا عَلَىٰ وَهْنٍ وَفِضْلُهُ ۖ فِي عَامَيْنِ أَنِ اشْكُرْ لِي
وَلِوَالِدِكَ ۖ إِلَى الْمَصِيرِ ﴿١٤﴾ وَإِنْ جَاهِلَاكَ عَلَىٰ أَنْ تُشْرِكَ بِي مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ ۖ
فَلَا تُطِعْهُمَا وَصَاحِبْهُمَا فِي الدُّنْيَا مَعْرُوفًا وَاتَّبِعْ سَبِيلَ مَنْ أَنَابَ إِلَيَّ ۚ ثُمَّ إِلَيَّ
مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَأُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٥﴾

And We commanded man (to be good) about his parents. His mother carried him facing weakness after weakness, and his weaning is in two years: "Be grateful to Me and to your parents. To Me is the ultimate return. [14] And if they force you to ascribe to Him partners about whom you have no knowledge, do not obey them. And be with them, in this world, with due fairness, and follow the way of the one who has turned himself towards Me. Then, towards Me is your return, so I shall tell you

about what you had been doing." [15]

Gratitude and Obedience to Parents is Obligatory - but, Obedience to anyone Counter to Divine Command is not Permissible

In effect, the command quoted above means: 'No doubt, We have asked children to be grateful and obedient to their parents. We have even commanded them to be grateful to Us, and along with it, to be grateful and obedient to their parents. But, *Shirk* (the ascribing of partners in the pristine divinity of Allah Ta'ālā) is so grave a transgression and so serious a sin that it does not become permissible for anyone, not even if one's parents command or force someone to commit it. If the parents of a person start forcing him or her to take someone as a partner of Allah Ta'ālā, even in that case, it is not permissible to obey their command.'

Now, at this place, where command has been given to be grateful to parents and fulfill their rights, also pointed out is its efficient cause. Is it not that one's mother has undergone great trial in the phenomena of his or her life and survival? She has kept the child in her body for nine months remaining vigilant and protective all the time. Because of this, day by day, her weakness and discomfort kept increasing. This she braved through. Then, even after the birth of the child, she handled the task of feeding the child, a task that demanded painstaking attention day and night and which also added to the already receding graph of her weakness. Since, it is the mother who faces most of the hardship in bringing up the child, therefore, the right of mother has been made to precede even the right of father in the Shari'ah of Islām. What has been said in: *وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ إِحْسَانًا حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ وَهْنًا عَلَى وَهْنٍ وَفِطْرَتُهُ فِي عَمِيمٍ* (And We commanded man [to be good] about his parents. His mother carried him facing weakness after weakness, and his weaning is in two years - 14) comes to mean exactly this. After that, in: *وَأِنْ جَاهَدَاكَ* (And if they force you - 15), it was pointed out that the matter of ascribing anyone other than Allah with Him is serious. In it, even the (otherwise essential) obedience to parents is *ḥarām* (unlawful).

Islām's Peerless Law of Justice

Now in a situation under which the parents force a son or daughter to take to *Shirk* and *Kufr* while the command of Allah Ta'ālā tells them not to do what they say, things become difficult. One naturally fails to stay

within limits. In this case, while implementing the Divine injunction, the probability did exist that the son or daughter would have used improper language or manners in their response to parents and thus insulted them. Islām is a law, just and equitable. Here, everything has a limit. Therefore, right along with the command of not obeying parents in matters of *Shirk*, also given there was the command: صَاحِبُهُمَا فِي الدُّنْيَا مَعْرُوفًا (And be with them, in this world, with due fairness - 15).

It means: 'In the matter of the contravention of your faith and religion, do not obey parents. But, when it comes to worldly matters, such as serving parents physically or financially or in any other way necessary, do not fall short about it. Instead, deal with them in mundane matters according to recognized custom. Show no disrespect to them. Do not respond to what they say in a manner that hurts them unnecessarily. In other words, the pain you cause them by not accepting their insistence on *Shirk* and *Kufr* is something you will have to bear by, since you have no choice there. But, let this necessity stay within its functional limits and keep abstaining from causing any pain to them in other matters.'

Special Note

As for the weaning period of two years for a child mentioned in the verse, it is in accordance with customary practice. It carries no clarification concerning the injunction relevant to any additional period of suckling the child. A detailed explanation of this issue will, *insha'Allah*, appear under the commentary on the verse: رَحْمَلَهُ، وَفَضْلُهُ، ثَلَاثُونَ شَهْرًا (And his carrying and weaning is (in) thirty months - Al-Ahqāf, 46:15).

The Second Bequest of Luqmān about Articles of Belief

One should irrevocably hold the belief that the knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā surrounds every single particle of whatever there is in and around the expanses of the heavens and the earth with His most perfect power. Nothing can - be it the smallest of the small not commonly visible, or be it the farthest of the far, or be it behind layers upon layers of darkness and curtains - simply nothing can hide from the knowledge and view of Allah Ta'ālā. And He can, when He wills, cause it to be present, where He wills. This is what is meant by verse 16: يٰبْنِي اِنَّهَا اِنْ تَكُ مِنْتَقَالِ حَبَّةٍ مِّنْ خَرْدَلٍ (My dear son, in fact, if there be anything to the measure of a grain of rye, and it be [hidden] in a rock or in the heavens and the earth, Allah will bring it forth. Surely, Allah is All-Fine, All Aware). Then, the all-covering

knowledge and power of Allah Ta'ālā is, in its own place, a basic belief of Islām - and certainly, a great proof of *Tauḥīd*, the belief in the Oneness of Allah.

The Third Bequest of Luqmān about the Correction of Deed

There are many obligatory deeds, but the greatest and the most important of these is Ṣalāh - and not simply that it is important by itself, it also happens to be the master deed that becomes the catalyst changing other deeds towards the better as was pointed out in the Holy Qur'ān about it: *إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَى عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ* (Surely Ṣalāh restrains from shamelessness and evil - Al-'Ankabūt, 29:45). Therefore, out of the obligatory good deeds, the mention of Ṣalāh was considered sufficient when it was said: *يُٰبْنَىٰ أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ* (My dear son, establish Ṣalāh - 17). And as it has been explained earlier, the expression denoting the '*iqāmah*' of ṣalāh does not simply suggest the 'making' or 'saying' or 'doing' it. Instead of that, this term translated as 'establish' (in the absence of an exact equivalent) includes all attending considerations, such as performing it with due respect to its essentials and manners fully and faithfully, observing punctuality in its timings and being consistent in fulfilling its requisites.

The Fourth Bequest of Luqmān about the Betterment of People

Islām is a collective religion. Betterment of the community, along with the betterment of the individual, is an important part of its social system. Therefore, the duty of Bidding the Fair and Forbidding the Unfair (*amr bi 'l-ma'rūf and nahy 'ani 'l-munkar*) was mentioned along with as important a duty as the Ṣalāh. It was said: *وَأْمُرْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَانْهَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ* (and bid the Fair and forbid the Unfair - 17). Here are two duties: (1) Make yourself better and (2) make others better. Both need a lot of restraint and hard work. Facing these difficulties and remaining firm is no easy task. Particularly so, when those who stand to serve people by telling them what is good for them receive nothing but opposition and hostility in return. Therefore, while making this recommendation, it was also recommended: *وَاصْبِرْ عَلَىٰ مَا أَصَابَكَ إِنَّ ذَٰلِكَ مِنْ عَزَمِ الْأُمُورِ* (and observe patience on what befalls you. Surely, this is among the matters of determination - 17).

The Fifth Bequest of Luqmān about Social Manners

In verse 18, it was said: *وَلَا تُصَعِّرْ خَدَّكَ لِلنَّاسِ* (And do not turn your cheek away from people). The expression: *لَا تُصَعِّرْ* (*lā tuṣa'ir*) is a derivation from:

صَعَرَ (*ṣa'ara*) which is a disease among camels that causes a tilt in the neck similar to the stroke among human beings that makes the face become crooked. It carries the sense of turning one's face away (in disdain). Thus, the verse means: 'do not turn your face away from people when you meet them and talk to them for it is a sign of avoidance and arrogance and very much against the norms of gentle manners.'

In the next sentence of the verse, it was said: وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا (and do not walk on the earth haughtily - 18). The last word: مَرَحًا (*maraha*) denotes walking proudly with assumed airs. The sense of the statement is that Allah Ta'ālā has given this earth the lowest profile from among the entire range of elements He created. Is it not that you were born from it and on it you walk around? Know your reality and do not walk haughtily. This is the way of the arrogant. Therefore, after that, it was said: إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُورٍ (Surely, Allah does not like anyone arrogant, proud - 18).

Verse 19 begins with the statement: وَأَقْصِدْ فِي مَشْيِكَ (And be moderate in your walk). When done otherwise, in haste or helter-skelter, it goes against decorum and dignity. Says the Ḥadīth: "Making too much haste in walking ruins the radiance of the believer (al-Jamī' aṣ-Ṣaghīr from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه). Then, in a manner of walking such as this, there remains the likelihood of hurting one's own self or someone else as well. And being moderate in walking also tells us that one should not walk very slowly either. This is the habit of the arrogant and the ostentatious who like to impress people with their distinct class. Or, it is the habit of women who do not walk fast due to their natural modesty. Or, it is the habit of the sick in need of urgent medical attention who would do so out of compulsion. The first mode is *ḥarām*, and the second too, for it is not permissible if the intention is to strike a semblance with women. And when no such intention is there, the thing remains, after all, a defect for men. Finally, in the third mode, it is ungratefulness to Allah in that one stoops to feign the looks of the sick despite being all too healthy.

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه said: "The noble Ṣaḥābah were prohibited from walking hurriedly (as if running) like the Jews and also from walking very slowly (as if crawling) like the Christians. The order given to them was that they should take to a moderate gait in between the two.'

When Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها saw a person walking very slowly as if he was going to fall dead, she asked the people around, 'Why does he have to walk like that?' They told her, 'He is one of the Qurra'.' The word: قُرَاء (qurrā') is the plural of: القارى (al-qārī: one trained to recite the Qur'an in accordance with its Phonetics). In those days, someone who combined the twin mastery of reciting the Qur'an with authenticity and observance of due etiquette as well as being a perfect scholar of the Qur'an was also called a Qari'. So, by saying what they did, they meant that he was some big Qari' and 'Ālīm, therefore, he walked like that. Thereupon, Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها said, "Umar Ibn ul-Khaṭṭāb, may Allah be pleased with him, was a lot more Qārī' than he is. But, his habit was to walk swiftly when he walked (not in the sense of post-haste walking which is prohibited, rather meaning a functional swiftness in it). And when he talked, he talked in a manner that people would hear him well (not speaking at a pitch so low as would compel his audience to ask: Beg your pardon, what did you say)?

At the end of the fifth recommendation it was said: **وَاعْضُضْ مِنْ صَوْتِكَ** (and lower your voice - 19). 'Lowering' means: Do not raise your voice any more than necessary. And do not shout - as it appeared in the case of Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ immediately earlier. He talked in a manner that his audience would hear him without having to put any strain on their ears. Thereafter, it was said: **إِنَّ أَنْكَرَ الْأَصْوَاتِ لَصَوْتُ الْحَمِيرِ**. (Surely, the ugliest of voices is the voice of the donkeys - 19).

Regarding social manners, four prohibitions were mentioned here: (1) The prohibition of talking to and meeting with people face turned arrogantly; (2) the prohibition of walking haughtily on God's earth; (3) the instruction to be moderate in one's walking; and (4) the prohibition of talking very loudly.

All these virtues were already part of the habits and traits of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. As in the Shamā'il of Tirmidhī, Sayyidnā Ḥusain ؓ says that he asked his father, Sayyidnā 'Alī al-Murtaḍa ؓ about the manner in which he interacted with people he sat with. He said:

كان دائم البشر سهل الخلق لئِن الجانب ليس بفظ ولا غليظ ولا صخاب في الاسواق ولا فحاش ولا عيَاب ولا مُشاح يتغافل عما لا يشتهى ولا يؤيس منه ولا

يجيب فيه قد ترك نفسه من ثلاث المراء والا كبار وما لا يعنيه

"He was always cheerful, naturally obliging, gentle. Neither impolite, nor rude, he was not clamorous or immodest and no faultfinder and no miser. He would remain indifferent to what he did not like, yet would not make others become distracted from it (if *halal* and desirable to have) and would not say anything that would stop others from having what he did not want (instead, would observe silence). There were three things he had left out for good: (1) Disputation, (2) Arrogance and (3) Indulgence with what was unnecessary, not worth doing."

Verses 20 - 32

أَلَمْ تَرَوْا أَنَّ اللَّهَ سَخَّرَ لَكُم مَّا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَأَسْبَغَ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعَمَهُ ظَاهِرَةً وَبَاطِنَةً ۚ وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يُجَادِلُ فِي اللَّهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَلَا هُدًى وَلَا كِتَابٍ مُّنِيرٍ ﴿٢٠﴾ وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُم اتَّبِعُوا مَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ قَالُوا بَلْ نَتَّبِعُ مَا وَجَدْنَا عَلَيْهِ آبَاءَنَا ۖ أَوَلَوْ كَانَ الشَّيْطَانُ يَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَىٰ عَذَابِ السَّعِيرِ ﴿٢١﴾ وَمَن يُسْلِمْ وَجْهَهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ فَقَدْ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَىٰ ۖ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ عَاقِبَةُ الْأُمُورِ ﴿٢٢﴾ وَمَن كَفَرَ فَلَا يَحْزُنكَ كُفْرُهُ ۖ إِلَيْنَا مَرْجِعُهُمْ فَنُنَبِّئُهُم بِمَا عَمِلُوا ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ ﴿٢٣﴾ نُمَتِّعُهُمْ قَلِيلًا ثُمَّ نَضْطَرُّهُمْ إِلَىٰ عَذَابٍ غَلِيظٍ ﴿٢٤﴾ وَلَكِن سَأَلْتَهُم مَّن خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ لَيَقُولُنَّ اللَّهُ ۗ قُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ ۗ بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ ﴿٢٦﴾ وَلَوْ أَنَّ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ مِن شَجَرَةٍ أَقْلَامٌ وَالْبَحْرُ يَمُدُّهُ مِن بَعْدِهِ سَبْعَةُ أَبْحُرٍ مَا نَفَدَتْ كَلِمَتُ اللَّهِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٢٧﴾ مَا خَلَقَكُمْ وَلَا بَعَثَكُمْ إِلَّا كَنَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ بَصِيرٌ ﴿٢٨﴾ أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يُولِجُ اللَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ وَيُولِجُ النَّهَارَ فِي

الَّيْلِ وَسَخَرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ كُلٌّ يَجْرِي إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى وَأَنَّ
 اللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ ﴿٢٩﴾ ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ وَأَنَّ مَا يَدْعُونَ
 مِنْ دُونِهِ الْبَاطِلُ ۖ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْكَبِيرُ ﴿٣٠﴾ أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ الْفُلْكَ
 تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ بِنِعْمَتِ اللَّهِ لِيُرِيكُمْ مِّنْ آيَاتِهِ ۖ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ
 لِّكُلِّ صَبَّارٍ شَكُورٍ ﴿٣١﴾ وَإِذَا غَشِيَهُمْ مَّوْجٌ كَالظُّلَلِ دَعَوْا اللَّهَ
 مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ ۚ فَلَمَّا نَجَّاهُمْ إِلَى الْبَرِّ فَمِنْهُمْ مُّقْتَصِدٌ وَمَا
 يَجْحَدُ بِآيَاتِنَا إِلَّا كُلُّ خَتَّارٍ كَفُورٍ ﴿٣٢﴾

Have you not seen that Allah has subjugated for you what is in the heavens and what is on the earth and has perfected His blessings on you, both outward and inward? And among the people there is one who debates about Allah with no knowledge, no guidance and no book to enlighten. [20] And when it is said to them, "follow what Allah has sent down," they say, "instead, we would follow what we found our fathers on." Is it so - even though the Satan has been calling them to the punishment of the flaming Fire? [21]

And whoever submits his self to Allah and is good in deeds, he does, in fact, hold on to the strongest ring. And towards Allah is the ultimate end of all matters. [22]

And whoever disbelieves, let not his disbelief grieve you. To Us is their return. Then We will tell them what they did. Surely, Allah is All Aware of what lies in the hearts. [23] We let them enjoy a little, then We will drag them to a heavy punishment. [24]

And if you ask them as to who has created the heavens and the earth, they will certainly say, "Allah." Say, "Alhamdulillah" (Praise be to Allah). But most of them do not know. [25]

To Allah belongs what is in the heavens and the earth. Surely, it is Allah who is free of all needs, worthy of every praise. It is Allah who is All-Independent, Ever-Praised. [26]

And if all trees that are on the earth were to be pens

and the ocean (converted into ink) is supported by seven seas following it, the words of Allah would not come to an end. Surely, Allah is Mighty, Wise. [27]

Creation and resurrection of you all is no more (to Allah) than that of one single person. Surely, Allah is All-Hearing, All Seeing. [28]

Did you not see that Allah makes the night enter into the day, and makes the day enter into the night, and He has subjugated the sun and the moon, each running towards an appointed time, and that Allah is fully aware of what you do? [29] That is because Allah is the only Real One and what they invoke other than Him is false and Allah is the High, the Great. [30]

Did you not see that the ships sail through the sea by the grace of Allah, so that He shows you some of His signs? In that, indeed, there are signs for every man of patience and gratitude. [31]

And when they are covered by waves like canopies, they pray to Allah, having faith purely in Him. Then, once He brings them safe to the land, some of them are (still) balanced. And no one denies Our signs except every ungrateful traitor. [32]

Commentary

At the beginning of the Sūrah, the *Kāfirs* and the *Mushriks* were admonished for still persisting with their *Kufr* and *Shirk* despite that they had seen the manifestations of the all-encompassing knowledge and the most perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā. And in contrast to their condition, obedient believers were praised and mention was made of their good end. In between, the description of the bequests (*waṣāyā*) of Luqmān, peace on him, was in a way a complement of the same subject. In the verses cited above, the text reverts to the subjects of Allah Ta'ālā's all-encompassing knowledge and power, His bounties and favors showered on the creations with an exhortation to believe in the principle of His Oneness.

The expression: سَخَّرَ لَكُم (sakhkhara lakum: translated as 'subjugated for you') in verse 20: سَخَّرَ لَكُم مَّا فِى السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِى الْأَرْضِ (Allah has subjugated for you what is in the heavens and what is on the earth) is well known and means to make something subservient to someone. This raises a question at this place. Is it not that, first of all, not even everything on the

earth is subservient to human will and command? In fact, there are many things that act counter to human choice. As for things of the heavens particularly, there exists just about no probability of their being subservient to human beings. The answer is that 'subjugation' really means to force something into doing a particular job in a state of virtual compulsion. So, subjugating the entire creation of the heavens and the earth for human beings means that the whole range of such creations was yoked in their service to bring all sorts of benefits to them. Out of these things, many were put in their service by subjecting them to their command as well, in that they could use them as and when they wished. But, there are other things that have been, of course, commissioned to serve them - which they are doing all right - but, such was the dictate of Divine wisdom, that they were not made subject to the command of human beings, for example, the heavenly creations, planets, stars, lighting, rains and similar others. Had they been subjugated to follow human orders, these elements of creation would have been affected by human temperaments, tastes and varying conditions. One human being would have wanted the sun to rise early while the need of the other would have it rise later. Someone would have asked for rains while the other, being in travel through an open field, would have opted for no rains. So, these divergent demands would have triggered operational malfunction in the workings of the universal heavenly system. Therefore, Allah Ta'ālā did put all these things into the service of human beings but did not make them subject to their will and command. This too is, in a way, subjugation. Allah knows best.

The word: *وَأَسْبَغَ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعَمَهُ* (isbāgh) in the next sentence of verse 20: *وَأَسْبَغَ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعَمَهُ* (and has perfected His blessings on you, both outward and inward) means to perfect, make complete, provide in great abundance to the last fill. The Arabic word: *نِعَمٌ* (ni'am) means 'blessings' which human beings recognize through their senses, for instance, the beauty of shape and the symmetry of human limbs made into such proportion as would allow maximum functional movement causing no disfigurement of one's shape and looks. Similarly, provisions, property; wealth, avenues of economic opportunity, health and well being are also outward and perceived blessings. In the same way, making the religion of Islām easy to follow, being enabled to obey Allah and His Rasūl, the ascendancy of

Islām over other faiths and the support given to Muslims encountering enemies also come under the same outward blessings. As for inward blessings, they relate to the human heart, such as, 'Imān (faith), knowing Allah (*ma'rifah*), intellect, reason, good morals, the good fortune of having one's sins left unexposed and of one's crimes not punished instantly and many others.

The manifestations of Allah's knowledge, power and blessings are endless. These cannot be encompassed by anyone through speech, nor can any pen write them comprehensively. This has been stated in the verse: *وَلَوْ أَنَّ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ أَقْلَامٌ* (27) through a similitude. Says the similitude: 'If all trees that are on the earth were to be pens (or pens were to be made of all branches on them) and the ocean (converted into ink) is supported by seven seas following it, the words of Allah would (still) not come to an end.' The expression: *كلمات الله* (*kalimātul-lah*, i.e. the words of Allah) means His knowledge and wisdom (*Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī* and *Maḥzarī*) which includes the manifestations of Divine power and Divine blessings. Then, the 'seven seas' referred to here do not mean that there are seven seas present elsewhere. Instead of that, this is a manner of saying: Suppose if this ocean were to be replenished with seven more oceans, still then, all these words of Allah could not be committed to writing. Even the number of 'seven' appears here as a part of the example. No restriction is intended. Another verse of the Qur'ān proves it. There it was said:

قُلْ لَوْ كَانَ الْبَحْرُ مِدَادًا لَكَلِمَتِ رَبِّي لَنَفِدَ الْبَحْرُ قَبْلَ أَنْ تَنفَدَ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّي وَلَوْ جِئْنَا بِمِثْلِهِ مَدَدًا

Say, 'If the ocean were to be ink for the Words of my Lord, the ocean would have been consumed before the Words of my Lord are exhausted, even though we were to bring another one, like it, in addition' - Al-Kahf, 18:109.

In this verse, by saying: *بِمِثْلِهِ* (*bimithlihi*: like it), a clear hint has been given that, no matter how many oceans are supposed, their collective writing fluid cannot circumscribe the Words of Allah. Rationally, the reason is obvious. The oceans may be added one after the other and be they seven or seven thousand, they shall still remain limited while the Words of Allah (knowledge) are unlimited. How, then, can something limited make an all-encompassing coverage of what is unlimited?

As it appears in some narratives, this verse was revealed in response to a question posed by Jewish priests. The reason which prompted them to ask this question was the verse of the Qur'ān where it has been said: وَمَا أُوْتِيتُمْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا (and you are not given but a little from the knowledge - Al-'Isra', 17:85). When the Holy Prophet ﷺ came to the blessed city of Madinah, some Jewish priests visited him and it was about this verse that they confronted him by saying, "You say that you have been given a little from the knowledge. Is this what you are saying about your people, or have you included us too therein?" The Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "I mean all," that is, 'our people and the Jews and Christians as well.' Thereupon, increasing the tempo of their opposition, they said, "To us, Allah Ta'ālā has given the Torah which stands out as: بَيَانَ لِّكُلِّ شَيْءٍ (an explanation of everything)." He said, "That too is but a little as compared to Divine Knowledge. Then, even the total knowledge contained in the Torah is not known to you either - what you go by is no more than a certain measure of what you need. Therefore, as compared to the Divine Knowledge, the collective knowledge of all Scriptures and Prophets is also nothing but a little." It was to support this statement that the verse: وَلَوْ أَنَّ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ أَقْلَامٌ (And if all trees that are on the earth were to be pens... - 27) was revealed. (Ibn Kathīr)

Verses 33 - 34

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ وَآخِشُوا يَوْمًا لَا يَجْزِي وَالِدٌ عَنْ وَلَدِهِ
وَلَا مَوْلُودٌ هُوَ جَازٍ عَنْ وَالِدِهِ شَيْئًا إِنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ فَلَا تَغُرَّنَّكُمُ
الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا وَلَا يَغُرَّنَّكُم بِاللَّهِ الْغُرُورُ ﴿٣٣﴾ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عِنْدَهُ عِلْمُ
السَّاعَةِ وَيُنَزِّلُ الْغَيْثَ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْأَرْحَامِ وَمَا تَدْرِي نَفْسٌ
مَّاذَا تَكْسِبُ غَدًا وَمَا تَدْرِي نَفْسٌ بِأَيِّ أَرْضٍ تَمُوتُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ
عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ ﴿٣٤﴾

O people, fear your Lord and fear a day when no father will suffice his son, nor will a son be sufficing his father in the least. Surely, the promise of Allah is true. So, the worldly life must not deceive you, nor you should ever be deceived about Allah by the Deceiver.

[33] Surely, it is Allah with whom rests the knowledge of the Hour; and He sends down the rain and He knows what is in the wombs. And no one knows what he will earn tomorrow and no one knows in which land he will die. Surely, Allah is All Knowing, All Aware. [34]

Commentary

In the first of the two verses cited above, the address is to common people, believing and disbelieving both. They have been served with a notice that they will face Allah and be accountable before Him for their deeds on the day of Judgement and that they should be prepared for it. It was said: يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمْ (O people, fear your Lord - 33). At this place, the text has not gone by the name of Allah Ta'ālā or His some other attribute. Instead of that, it has elected to mention the attribute of *Rabb* (master, sustainer of all, usually translated as Lord with this sense included therein). This serves as an indicator towards the nature of fearing Allah Ta'ālā. Hence, the command to fear given here is not the kind of fear one habitually has from some beast or enemy. The reason is that 'Allah Ta'ālā is your *Rabb*. He nourishes, sustains and cherishes you. He is the compassionate master. Why would someone apprehend this kind of danger from Him?' Instead of that, the fear mentioned at this place is the particular 'fear' that is necessarily generated because of the sublimity and awe of one's elders. It is in that sense that a son 'fears' his father and a student, his teacher. They are no enemies. They are not going to hurt them. But, their affectionate sublimity and awe reside in hearts and it is from there that these two make one obey a father and a teacher. This is what is meant at this place and it is being said that 'the sublimity and awe of Allah Ta'ālā should reign supreme over your hearts so that you can obey Him, perfectly and easily.'

The next sentence reads: وَآخِشُوا يَوْمًا لَا يَجْزِي وَالِدٌ عَنْ وَلَدِهِ وَلَا مَوْلُودٌ هُوَ جَازٍ عَنْ وَالِدِهِ شَيْئًا (and fear a day when no father will suffice his son, nor will a son be sufficing his father in the least - 33). It means the father and son out of whom one is a believer and the other, a disbeliever. The sense is that a believing father would neither be able to remit or reduce the punishment of his disbelieving son nor would he be able to bring any benefit to him. Similarly, a believing son will be of no avail to his disbelieving father.

The reason for this particularization lies in other verses of the noble Qur'ān, and the narratives of Ḥadīth. There it has been clarified that, on

the day of Judgement, parents will intercede on behalf of their children and the children on behalf of their parents. Then, this intercession will turn out to be successful as well. Says the Qur'an: وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَاتَّبَعَتْهُمْ ذُرِّيَّتُهُمْ بِإِيمَانٍ أَلْحَقْنَا بِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ (And those who believed and their children followed them in belief, We will join their children with them - 52:21) even though their deeds may not match the ranking of the deeds of their parents, but such would be the *barakah* of righteous parents that they too would be made to reach where their parents are. But, this is subject to the condition that the children should be believers - even though, their deeds may have suffered from some shortcomings.

Similarly, in another verse, it was said: جَنَّتٌ عَدْنٌ يَدْخُلُونَهَا وَمَنْ صَلَحَ مِنْ آبَائِهِمْ وَأَزْوَاجِهِمْ وَذُرِّيَّاتِهِمْ (the eternal gardens they enter, and the righteous of their fathers, spouses, and progeny as well - 13:23). Qualification refers here to their being believers.

Both these verses prove that, should parents and children and, in the same way, a husband and wife, share the common denominator of being believers, then, they will receive benefit from each other even on the day of Judgement. Similar to this, there are several narratives of Ḥadīth which report children interceding on behalf of their parents. Therefore, this rule set forth in the present verse (33) - that no father can bring any benefit to his son and no son to his father on the day of Judgement - can become operative only in a situation when one of them is a believer while the other, a disbeliever. (Maḥzarī)

Special Note:

Here, it should be noted that the statement declaring the inability of a father to bring benefit to his son (لَا يَجْزِي وَالِدٌ عَنْ وَلَدِهِ) (3 -) has been made through a verbal sentence, but two changes were made while mentioning the other side of it. Firstly, it was described in the form of a nominal sentence. Secondly, the word: مولود (*maulūd*) meaning the born one, that is, a son, was employed instead of (ولد: *walad*) which is more common for 'son.' There is a wise consideration at work here. A nominal sentence is more emphatic as compared to a verbal sentence. By this change in the sentence, a hint was released towards the difference between a father and his children. The love of a father with his children is more intense. Contrary to this, the love of children does not reach this level of intensity even in the mortal world. However, the likelihood of either of the two

bringing any benefit for each other on the day of Judgement has been negated in the case of both, but the children's lack of ability to bring benefit has been described with added emphasis. Then, there is a particular wise consideration in electing the word: مولود (*maulūd*) instead of ولد (*walad*). The word, مولود '*maulūd*' denotes one's own son or children only. As for the word, ولد '*walad*,' it is general and includes the children of one's children as well. Thus, it is from another angle that the same subject has been strengthened. It is being virtually said, 'when even the son from the very loins of the father would be of no avail to the father, any expectations from the grandson and the great grandson are futile.'

In the next verse, the knowledge of five things has been declared as exclusive to Allah Ta'ālā and that no created being has that knowledge except Him and at this ends the Sūrah Luqmān:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ عِنْدَهُ عِلْمُ السَّاعَةِ وَيُنَزِّلُ الْغَيْثَ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْأَرْحَامِ وَمَا تَدْرِي نَفْسٌ مَّاذَا تَكْسِبُ غَدًا وَمَا تَدْرِي نَفْسٌ بِأَيِّ أَرْضٍ تَمُوتُ

Surely, it is Allah with whom rests the knowledge of the Hour, and He sends down the rain, and He knows what is in the wombs. And no one knows what he will earn tomorrow and no one knows in which land he will die. Surely, Allah is All Knowing, All Aware - 31:34.

Though, it has not been made explicit in the first three things that no one has their knowledge other than Allah, but the style of the statement is such that it seems to give the impression that the knowledge of these things rests limited to Divine Knowledge. As for the other two things mentioned later, there it has been explicitly said that no one has their knowledge other than Allah. These very five things have been called "keys to the Unseen" (مفاتيح الغيب : *mafātiḥ al-ghayb*) in a verse of Sūrah Al-An'ām: (وَعِنْدَهُ مَفَاتِيحُ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْلَمُهَا إِلَّا هُوَ) (And with Him are the keys of the Unseen. No one knows them but He - 6:59). In Ḥadīth, it has been referred as مفاتيح (*mafātiḥ al-ghayb*). Both مفاتيح (*mafātiḥ*) and مفاتيح (*mafātiḥ*) are the plural forms of مفتاح (*miftāḥ*) meaning key which opens locks. It signifies sources of the Unseen that unravel its information.

The Issue of the 'Ilm ul-Ghayb (Knowledge of the Unseen)

Necessary details about this issue have been given under the commentary on verse 65: قُلْ لَا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ الْغَيْبَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ (Say, 'No one

in the heavens and the earth has the knowledge of the Unseen except Allah.' - 27:65) of Sūrah An-Naml (Ma'ariful-Qur'ān, Volume VI). That the knowledge of the unseen is particular to Allah Ta'ālā in the absolute sense has been explicitly mentioned in this verse - and this has been the belief of the entire Muslim community from the earliest to the succeeding generations. As for the description of only five things particularly - that no created being has their knowledge and that it is Allah alone who knows these - it is not meant for particularization. Otherwise, it would pose a contradiction with the verse of Sūrah An-Naml quoted above. The fact is that these five things have been mentioned here to highlight their special significance.

There is a reason for this specific treatment and marked attention. Things of the Unseen that one is generally keen to find out are just these five. Then, there are astrologers and their kind who lay a claim to the knowledge of the unseen. Things they usually pick up to inform people about, and thereby prove that they are possessors of the knowledge of the unseen, are again these very five things. And in some narratives of Ḥadīth it has been reported that someone had asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ about these five things whereupon this verse was revealed and wherein it has been stated that the knowledge of these five is particular with Allah Ta'ālā. (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī)

As for the statement of the Holy Prophet ﷺ reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar and Ibn Mas'ūd رضى الله عنهم اجمعين in Ḥadīth: أُوتِيْتُ مَفَاتِيحَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا الْخَمْسَ (I have been given the keys to everything except the five) (reported by Imām Aḥmad - Ibn Kathīr), the word: أُوتِيْتُ (I have been given) itself makes it all clear. It shows that the knowledge of unseen things other than these five which came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ came in the form of revelation (*waḥy*) from Allah Ta'ālā. Therefore, it is not included under the definition of the knowledge of the unseen ('Ilm ul-ghayb) because the news about things unseen given to the blessed prophets through *waḥy* (revelation) and to the men of Allah (*auliyā'*) through *ilhām* (inspiration) come from Allah Ta'ālā. In terms of their reality, they are not the knowledge of the unseen based on which they could be called the possessors of 'the knowledge of the unseen' ('*ālim ul-ghayb*). They are, rather, أَنْبَاءُ الْغَيْبِ (news of the unseen). This is an area of Divine prerogative. Whenever Allah Ta'ālā so wills, and in whatever

measure He wills, He would bestow such information on His angels, messengers and favored servants. These are called "أَنْبَاءُ الْغَيْبِ" (*anbā 'ul-ghayb*) in the noble Qur'ān, for instance: تِلْكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوحِيهَا إِلَيْكَ (These are some reports from the Unseen (events) which We reveal to you - 11:49).

Therefore, the Ḥadīth quoted above means that, no doubt, Allah Ta'ālā has made these five things so exclusive to Himself that no angel or messenger has been given their knowledge even as 'news' of the unseen. However, besides these, a fair amount of the knowledge relating to other unseen things is given out to the blessed prophets through the medium of *wahy* (revelation).

Thus, from what has been discussed above, we now know one more reason why these five things have been mentioned specially.

A doubt and its answer

The cited verse proves that even in the absolute knowledge of the unseen which is an integral attribute of Allah Ta'ālā there are five particular things the knowledge of which is not given to any prophet even through *wahy* (revelation). This demands that these things should never become known to anyone. However, countless events relating to men of Allah (*auliyā'*) in the Muslim community have been reported to the effect that somewhere they gave the news of rain, or pregnancy, or someone doing or not doing a deed in the future, or someone's exact place of death. And this foreboding turned out to be true as well when observed.

Similarly, there are some astrologers or people well versed in the art of divination through what is known as *Jafar* and *Ramal* who would come up with some bits of information about these things and these, at some times, would turn out to be true as well. This raises the question: How, then, could these five things remain exclusive to Divine Knowledge?

One answer to this question is the same as has appeared in details under our Commentary on Sūrah An-Naml (27:65, Ma'āriful-Qur'ān, Volume VI). A brief one has been given above to the effect that the Knowledge of the Unseen, in its real sense, is knowledge without the mediation of a physical cause - that is, *sans* medium, by itself. If these things are received by the blessed prophets through *wahy* (revelation), by men of Allah (*auliyā'*) through *ilhām* (inspiration) and by astrologers and other

claimants to divination or prediction through their calculations and physical causes, then, that is no knowledge of the unseen as such. Instead, these are 'news' of the unseen. If someone from among the creation of Allah were to receive such news relating to some partial or personal matter, it would not be contradictory of the cited verse. The reason is simple. According to the substance of the verse, the total knowledge of these five things, a knowledge which comprehends everything created as well as every relative condition, is something not given by Allah Ta'ālā to anyone, neither through *wahy* (revelation) nor through *ilhām* (inspiration). That someone gets to receive some partial knowledge through *ilhām* (inspiration) in a stray case is not contradictory to it.

In addition to that, when we say '*ilm* (knowledge), it means absolute knowledge. That no one has except Allah Ta'ālā. The knowledge a man of Allah (*waliyy*) receives through *ilhām* (inspiration) is not absolute. Many probabilities of error or false perception exist in it. As for the information given out by astrologers and their ilk, it is a common observation that they hardly come up to the level of a single truth out of ten lies. How can that be called 'absolute knowledge'?

The issue of the Knowledge of the Unseen: An important note

My respected teacher, Shaykh ul-Islām Shabbīr Aḥmad 'Usmānī has made a brief but comprehensive comment in his explanatory notes on the Holy Qur'ān which helps remove all doubts and difficulties of the nature mentioned above. He has said that there are two kinds of *al-Ghayb* (the unseen): (1) Injunctions of the unseen (*al- aḥkām ul-ghaybiyyah*), such as, the injunctions originating from revealed laws that include the knowledge of the Being and attributes of Allah Ta'ālā as well and are called the knowledge of beliefs (*al-'aqā'id*). Also included therein are all injunctions of the Shari'ah or revealed law which tell us as to what sort of conduct meets the approval or disapproval of Allah Ta'ālā. It goes without saying that all these things belong to nowhere but the unseen.

(2) Cosmology of the unseen (*al-akwān ul-ghaybiyyah*), that is, the knowledge of the events occurring in the world. The knowledge of the unseen things of the first kind has been given by Allah Ta'ālā to His prophets and messengers. This is mentioned in the Qur'ān in the following words: *فَلَا يُظْهِرُ عَلَى غَيْبِهِ أَحَدًا إِلَّا مَنِ ارْتَضَىٰ مِنْ رَسُولٍ* : '(He is the) Knower of

the Unseen. So He does not let anyone know His Unseen, except a messenger whom He chooses (to inform through revelation) - 72:26-27.

As for the unseen events and occurrences of the other kind, their knowledge - the whole of it - is just not given by Allah Ta'ālā to anyone. That remains categorically exclusive to Him as His intrinsic attribute. But, He gives partial knowledge of particular events when He wills and as much He wills. As such, the real knowledge of the unseen - all of it - remains exclusive to Allah Ta'ālā. Then, as is His customary practice, He reveals to the blessed prophets the knowledge of the injunctions of the unseen from out of His knowledge of the unseen - and this very knowledge is the purpose of their mission. Then, there is the partial knowledge of the events and occurrences of the world. That too is given by Allah Ta'ālā to prophets through revelation (*waḥy*) and men of Allah (*auliyā'*) through inspiration (*ilhām*) at His discretion and to the measure of His choice. Thus, the part of knowledge so given is knowledge that has been bestowed on them by Allah Ta'ālā. In the real sense, this cannot be called: علم الغيب (*ilm ul-ghayb*: the knowledge of the unseen). Instead, it is called: انباء الغيب : "*an[m]bā' il-ghayb*: the news of the unseen."

Special note concerning the words of the verse

In this verse, the objective is to describe the exclusiveness of the knowledge of these five things with Allah Ta'ālā in a manner that shows marked care and attention. This objective obviously required that five things should have been enumerated under a single head saying that their knowledge is exclusive to Allah Ta'ālā and that no created entity has been given their knowledge. But, in the cited verse, this was not done. Instead, as for the knowledge of the initial three things, it was mentioned positively as being exclusive to Allah - while, in the later two things, the statement was negative declaring that no one other than Allah has their knowledge. Let us go back to the initial three things. Here, a variation in style becomes fairly visible even in these three. We see that the knowledge of the Hour has been mentioned in the following manner: إِنَّ اللَّهَ عِنْدَهُ عِلْمُ السَّاعَةِ (Surely, it is Allah with whom rests the knowledge of the Hour). Then the mode changes. The second thing has been taken up in the form of a verbal sentence by saying: يُنَزِّلُ الْغَيْثَ (and He sends down the rain). It simply has no mention of the knowledge of rain. Instead, it mentions the sending down of rain. The third thing was mentioned with a

changed mode once again and it was said: وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْأَرْحَامِ (and He knows what is in the wombs). This change of modality can only be taken as a sampling of versatility in eloquence of speech. If one were to ponder, there are other elements of wisdom embedded here. The respected author of Bayān ul-Qur'ān has described these in his Tafsīr.

In brief, the last two things - what will one earn tomorrow and in which land will one die - are states connected with the human person. It was probable that one would try to seek the relevant knowledge about these. Therefore, in both these cases, the acquiring of such knowledge on the part of anyone other than Allah was negated. Also proved effectively through this statement was the absence of the knowledge of the first three things for anyone other than Allah. The argument was simple. Here is someone who does not know about his doings and earnings tomorrow. Then, he does not know the end of it all, the point when and where he will die. How could he, then, be expected to know the heavens and the coming of rains and the thing hidden in the dark layers of a mother's womb? Finally, when mentioning the last thing, it was said that one does not know the place of one's death. Yes, the text mentions 'place' only - although, one does not know one's time of death too just like the place of death. The reason is that the place of death, even if not known definitely, is something one can guess in terms of one's outward living conditions. One can naturally assume that the place where one is settled would be the place where one would die, and at the least, the place where one is to die is, after all, present somewhere in the world. This is contrary to the time of death. This time is in the future and the future is not here yet. So, a person who cannot know about his place of death, despite that it is present actually, how can it be imagined about him that he would come to know his time of death which simply does not exist then?

So, the negation of one thing here makes the negation of others obvious in the first degree. Therefore, the text takes up both these things in the negative mode. As for the first three things, they are by themselves outside the scope of human access under perceptible conditions. That human knowledge has nothing to do with it is all too clear. Therefore, a positive mode was chosen to describe their exclusiveness to Allah Ta'ālā.

Before parting with the subject, a few words about the use of nominal form in the first sentence and the verbal one in the later two sentences

may be useful. Perhaps, the wisdom therein is to suggest that the Qiyāmah or the Last Day is a definite imperative with no change in it. This is contrary to the coming of rain and the period of pregnancy. Their conditions keep changing - and the verbal sentence is suggestive of change. Therefore, that is what was used in both these cases. Then, we notice a delicacy of treatment within these two as well. When dealing with the conditions of pregnancy, what was mentioned was Divine knowledge: وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْأَرْحَامِ (and He knows what is in the wombs - 34) while in taking up the subject of the coming of rain, there is just no mention of knowledge. There is a reason for it. Here, by mentioning the sending down of rain, it was tacitly suggested that the rain to which are tied thousands of human benefits is something that comes at the bidding of Allah alone and that no one else exercises the ultimate control over it. As for the essential exclusiveness of its knowledge being with Allah, it already stands proved from the very context of the statement. ...

Alhamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Luqmān
Ends here